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THE FAMILY AND HUMAN PROCREATION

PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE FAMILY
VATICAN CITY 2006

> *To His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI, called by the Lord to be the Successor of Peter, we present this study as a modest tribute with gratitude for his great dedication to the truth about man and about the family, in whose proclamation and defense he faithfully perseveres.*

INTRODUCTION: THE FAMILY AND PROCREATION

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1. Faithful to its original vocation, the Pontifical Council for the Family pays attention to the signs of the times to give the right response to the many problems that the family encounters on its path. Pope John Paul II, felicis ricordationis, who in the course of the years chose to follow this Dicastery closely and showed it preferential love, outlined the panorama of our activities serving the family, the pillar of society and the vital place for the transmission of life, and life in the light of the Christian faith. In the Motu Proprio of May 9, 1981, Familia a Deo Instituta, the Holy Father wrote:

> "Careful reflection on the experience of these years, but above all the desire to give an ever more adequate response to the expectations of the Christian people, as gleaned by the Episcopate of the entire world and expressed in the recent Synod of Bishops, which dealt with the family, has led to the decision to give the Committee for Family a new character and its own proper structure so that it can deal with the specific problems of the family, from the point of view of pastoral care and the apostolic activity concerning this vital sector of human life.... The Pontifical Council for the Family has the task of promoting the pastoral care of the family and of the specific apostolate in the area of the family, by putting into effect the teachings and directives of the ecclesiastical Magisterium, so that Christian families may carry out the educative, evangelizing and apostolic mission to which they have been called" (n. 3).

Prophetic directives and necessary objectives

2. Among the specific tasks listed: "It attends to the spread of the doctrine of the Church regarding family problems, so that it can be integrally known and correctly presented to the Christian people both in catechesis and on a scientific level; it promotes and coordinates pastoral activity with regard to the problem of responsible parenthood according to the teaching of the Church" (ibid.). The recent discussions on family, life and population confirm that the directives imparted to the Council twenty-five years ago have lost none of their relevance or prophetic force.

We are addressing the theme of responsible procreation in the family precisely within these broad horizons of service in the cause of the Family and with respect for the guidelines provided by the Pontiff. The timeliness of the problem, its urgency and the need to discuss it can escape no one. Never in the past has human procreation, hence the family, been so threatened as in the culture of today. The causes vary, but the "eclipse" of God, the Creator of man, lies at the root of the profound current crisis of the whole truth about man, about human procreation and about the family.[1]

3. Throughout the world, both in the countries with an ancient Christian tradition and in the nations where the faith arrived more recently, there are many families in which the parents live profoundly united and in which the children have the joy of being born and being able to grow up in a place enlivened by a Christian spirit.

It is true that the natural institution of marriage and the family has never been prey to such violent attacks as it is now. New models of the family have emerged from radical movements. We have seen manifested panegyrics for the single-parent family and reconstituted, homosexual, lesbian families, etc. Homosexual couples claim the same rights as those reserved to husband and wife; they even claim the right to adoption. Women who are living in a lesbian relationship claim similar rights, demanding laws that give them access to heterologous artificial insemination or to embryonic implants. Furthermore, people maintain that the facility offered by the law to form these unusual couples must go hand in hand with the right to divorce or to repudiate.

Certain bioethical trends, moreover, are not foreign to the crisis of the family. In the examples we have cited, it is the law that is called upon to legalize forms of union which destabilize marriage and the family. On the other hand, in the case of certain bioethical trends, it is morality that is mobilized in the quest for justification of bio-medical practices which, in the conjugal union, separate the unitive end from the procreative end, the sexuality of love.

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[1] This document follows others of the Pontifical Council that appeared in previous years: 1992: In the Service of Life; From Despair to Hope: the Family and Drug Addiction; 1993: The Church and the International Year of the Family; 1994: Ethical and Pastoral Dimensions of Population Trends; 1995: The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality: Guidelines for Education within the Family; 1996: Preparation for the Sacrament of Marriage; 1997: Vademecum for Confessors Concerning Some Aspects of the Morality of Conjugal Life; 1999: The Family and Human Rights; 2000: Family, Marriage and "De Facto" Unions.

Couples are thus exposed to alienation from the intimate truth of their sexual relations. The transmission of life becomes a matter of technology and technicians. At times, the latter even dream of fabricating life, a life of irreproachable quality. The future would be that of procreation without human love.

The third front on which the family is undermined is that of birth control policies. Under the influence of Malthusian, neo-Malthusian and eugenic ideologies, the sexual behavior of couples is increasingly the victim of pressures, that is, of forms of coercion by public authorities, national or international, that are taken up by unscrupulous NGOs. There is no lack of data testifying to the alarming percentage of sterilized women, especially in the poorer countries. We likewise have reports available referring to the high percentage of women who have had recourse to contraception and to abortion.[2]

In addition to these factors are others: marriage is taking place later and later; the first child is born to ever older parents; divorce is ever more frequent and easy; an increasing percentage of young people tend to live in free consensual unions.[3]

In short, the situation remains dramatic. It suggests the existence of a correlation between the attacks targeting the family and those that have disturbing repercussions on procreation. Thus, a reflection is inevitably called for that will shed light on the anthropological foundations of family life as a place or environment for procreation and will thereby help the many people today who desire to lead a rich and fruitful family life and contribute to the social regeneration of the family in contexts where such regeneration is necessary.

4. The Second Vatican Council paved the way for us to an effective search for this meaning of human life, which is presented as a problem and a mystery but whose solution is found in the mystery of Christ (Gaudium et Spes, n. 22). Fortunately, although every day the Church asks with the Psalmist: "0 Lord, our Lord... what is man?" (Ps 8), in the face of the instability of atheistic forms of humanism, she is still firmly convinced, as John Paul II stated vigorously at Puebla, that she possesses the integral truth about man, his origins and his destiny; and consequently about his social life, as the same Council says: "In his fatherly concern for all of us, God desired that all men should form one family and deal with one another in a spirit of brotherhood" (Gaudium et Spes, n. 24).

"As Pastors", Pope John Paul II said, "you keenly realize that your chief duty is to be teachers of the truth... that comes from God. That truth includes the principle of authentic human liberation".

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[2] Contraception frequently involves potential or real abortion. The "day after" pill does so intentionally. By preventing the implantation of the fertilized egg in the mucus of the uterus, this drug causes the expulsion of the fertilized egg. Therefore, these drugs do not aim to prevent fertilization, the beginning of a new human life, but rather to eliminate it (cf. Pre-implantation and Emergency Contraception, in PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE FAMILY, Lexicon, Ambiguous and debatable terms regarding family life and ethical questions, English edition, Human Life International, 2006 [cited: Lexicon], pp. 751-770).

[3] In Familiaris Consortio, n. 81, "de facto free unions" are mentioned but not in the current sense of PACS, de facto unions, which are a recent phenomenon and demand civil consequences as if they were marriages.

And citing Paul VI's Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Nuntiandi, John Paul II adds, "The Gospel that has been entrusted to us is the word of truth. This truth sets us free... The truth about God, the truth about human beings and their mysterious destiny, the truth about the world...".[4]

In this horizon of understanding, Christian thought about man is found between the already and the not yet. The two wings that lift the Christian person, reason and revelation, are used for the flight towards an ever deeper understanding of his mystery. The two books written by God's hand, that of nature and that of Scripture, always open and never totally read by any mortal being, are our guide for the journey of the Christian mind towards man.

This fund of knowledge and of ancient and ever new truths is typical of Christian thought. Nature and grace are very different, but they are called to mutual cooperation. The Doctor communis has formulated this relationship clearly and definitively: Gratia non tollit sed perficit naturam.[5] The journey of man has something of the infinite about it. Heraclitus, the philosopher, confesses in a famous judgment on the soul: "You could not discover the limits of soul, even if you traveled by every path in order to do so; such is the depth of its logos".[6] For Christians, this journey can be in difficult circumstances since it requires loving and demands fidelity, but it is never uncertain because it relies on the light of faith, the example of Christ and the strength of grace communicated by the Holy Spirit.

Life, a gift of God

5. Christian anthropology has a clear answer to the question of man and therefore to the question of the family, and within the analysis of family life to the question of procreation. Man is a living being who receives life with the radical gift of existence. No one in the world gives life to himself. The Greeks declared that "man is begotten by man and by the sun as well",[7] because without the sun life on the planet earth would not be possible. Christian thought says far more: that human life does not come only from the parents or only from nature as a whole, but from God, since God and man cooperate in the begetting of man, every man. God, at the moment of fertilization, creates the soul and instills the soul in matter in such a way that from the very first instant this matter is a human body."[8] For this reason we speak of "procreation": God, the

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[4] Address of JOHN PAUL II to the Third General Conference of the Latin American Episcopate, Puebla de los Angeles, Mexico, 28 January 1979; PAUL VI, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Nuntiandi (8 December 1975), n. 78.
[5] "Grace does not destroy nature but perfects it", S.Th, I,1 8 ad 2.
[6] Cf. HERACLITUS, Fragmento dai presocratici, DIELS 22 B 45.
[7] Cf. ARISTOTLE, Physica, II, 4, 194b 13.
[8] Cf. Gratissimam Sane, n. 9: "Through the communion of persons which occurs in marriage, a man and a woman begin a family. Bound up with the family is the genealogy of every individual: the genealogy of the person. Human fatherhood and motherhood are rooted in biology, yet at the same time transcend it. The Apostle, with knees bowed 'before the Father from whom all fatherhood [and motherhood] in heaven and on earth is named', in a certain sense asks us to look at the whole world of living creatures, from the spiritual beings in heaven to the corporeal beings on earth. Every act of begetting finds its primordial model in the fatherhood of God. Nonetheless, in the case of man, this 'cosmic' dimension of likeness to God is not sufficient to explain adequately the relationship of fatherhood and motherhood. When a new

Creator and the human being, in a mysterious collaboration, are collaborators at infinitely different levels in bringing forth every human person. The man and the woman have, so to speak, received the mandate from God to take part as created beings in the divine creating power.

Man is the fruit of the love of God who is love but must also be the fruit of the love of the man and the woman; and more concretely, of the love of the man and the woman who, in loving each other, bring forth the family. The family alone is the adequate place for procreation. Man is an individual, personal being who can be described in very many ways: as an image of God, a reasonable animal, a synthesis of the universe or a microcosm, but he must also be recognized as a family being. This is why, because of its condition and dignity, human procreation has only one place worthy of its nature: the family founded on marriage.[9]

Towards a post-human future?

6. The Church today is called to propose Christian thought on responsible and family procreation to all the people of our time. This task is imposed on her from two sides: one positive, the other negative.

The former was pointed out most successfully in the Encyclical Redemptor Hominis (1979) by John Paul II with these words: "Man is the primary route that the Church must travel" (n. 14). God entrusted the mission of salvation to him and sent the Apostles into all the world. The Church is Catholic. Her Magisterium, like the Gospel, is for all people. Everything affecting the human being belongs to her.

The truth about the family and responsible procreation must be presented to everyone. This duty falls to the ministry of Peter at the service of the humanity of man. Since the time of John XXIII's Encyclical Pacem in Terris (1965) but also since much earlier, the Church has made her own Terence's famous maxim: Nihil humani a me alienum puto.[10] At the end of the Second Vatican Council, Paul VI asked the humanists of our time to recognize the Church's service to man and her title of champion of humanity.[11]

The other side, which leads to the need to proclaim the truth about responsible procreation, that is, the critical or negative side, refers to the cultural deviations of our time, in the context of both the family and procreation. Influenced by a rationalist type of Enlightenment, modern culture has

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person is born of the conjugal union of the two, he brings with him into the world a particular image and likeness of God himself: the genealogy of the person is inscribed in the very biology of generation".

[9] Cf. Centesimus Annus, n. 39: "The first and fundamental structure for 'human ecology' is the family, in which man receives his first formative ideas about truth and goodness, and learns what it means to love and to be loved, and thus what it actually means to be a person. Here we mean the family founded on marriage, in which the mutual gift of self by husband and wife creates an environment in which children (an be born and develop their potentialities, become aware of their dignity and prepare to face their unique and individual destiny".

[10] "I consider nothing human strange to me".

[11] Cf. PAUL VI, 7 December 1965: Il valore religioso del Concilio, n. 8.

forgotten its religious and humanist roots and, setting aside God and man's spiritual dimension, has become technical and scientific. Knowledge is directed neither towards truth nor towards good, but towards power and domination. Modern man has radicalized the tendency to occupy God's place and to replace him. Like Eve, he has believed the tempter who promises "you will be like God" (Gen 3:4). What counts are no longer the magnalia Dei, as in the Old Testament, but the magnalia hominis,[12] which Francis Bacon, the philosopher, was hoping for.

The Church recognizes human capacity and, therefore, the great things and achievements of which human beings are capable, with full sincerity and without reservations. God -- as Benedict XVI emphasized in the Encyclical Deus Caritas Est -- is not an adversary of man, nor does he fear man's power. On the contrary, it is he who has endowed the human being with his ability and his power. And the Church recognizes and proclaims him as such, inviting the generations to come to make every effort in order to ensure that the world may be ever more human. At the same time, however, she is aware not only that the power inherent in the human being is oriented to good, but also that it is necessary that man be conscious of his limitations and, consequently, open to the recognition of the value of others, of every human person, even the less gifted, and in the ultimate instance, of God. If he were not he would run the risk, as the legend of the Sorcerer's Apprentice demonstrates, of setting in motion processes that would end by destroying him.[13]

From the Enlightenment to scientism

7. The contemporary Enlightenment is marked by an abandonment of the deism typical of the thinkers of the Age of Enlightenment. For the majority of these thinkers, the existence of a god was beyond doubt; they refused, however, to recognize the existence of the God of the Revelation: this is what it means when it is said that they were not theists. It could be said, without forcing language, that these followers of the Enlightenment were anti-theists, not atheists.

However, their heirs followed the school of Feuerbach and became atheists. They took to its extreme consequences their jealousy of God, reappropriating the existence of God himself, which the deists still recognized. Thus, they are not merely anti-theists but atheists. In fact, they believe it is possible to exist only by denying the existence of a God, whether he is revealed or not.

Since the nineteenth century, this radically atheist current has found an ally in scientism, which holds that ultimately the only source of knowledge is our tangible experience. Metaphysical and religious questions are declared a priori useless. The psychological and chemical disciplines alone can provide a response to the questions that man asks about himself.

Scientism stated the following: God, if he exists, is incapable of revealing himself. God does not exist; God, in any case, is useless. It is up to man alone to take charge of his own destiny.

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[12] Francis Bacon was speaking of "magnalia naturae".
[13] Cf. Deus Caritas Est, n. 38.

Having freed himself from God, man was to ask science also to liberate him from morality. This would pave the way to his posing as a demiurge, dreaming of creating a new man, if necessary a physiological machine which he hoped to be able to recognize as the expression of his own creative genius. To all these ideas of the Enlightenment we respond: "How is it possible not to see that this outlandish project, in the long term, is veering towards suicide?".

8. Thus we find ourselves once again facing the dilemma between growth and destruction, to which we referred earlier, in many areas and also with regard to procreation. Today, the biological sciences are able to uncover many of life's secrets and can therefore contribute to improving them, even with regard to their initial moments. Yet this growth can and in fact does lead to situations in which man feels he is master of the world and of himself. Science and technology have convinced some people to claim that everything is the result of evolution, that man has no god, neither above nor below him; that the god of the past was created by man in his own image and likeness; that this god is dead and that now is the time to be able to produce the really new human being. In this perspective, people have reached the situation of the so-called "abolition of man", of believing in the end of post-modernity to initiate the new period: the post-human future.

In this cultural climate, the great challenges to the family and to responsible procreation are becoming more and more threatening on two fronts: against the family, since man is conceived of only as an individual, a sort of Robinson Crusoe; and against responsible procreation, because man, in this view, must experiment with all the possibilities of science and technology in order to produce a new man, constructed according to the criteria that technology offers. Experiences in the vegetable kingdom and the manipulation of animals are the prodromal steps to human cloning, or the prelude to arriving at man made by man in his own image and likeness. As the grim practices today legalized in certain countries confirm, if man arrogates to himself the power of fabricating man, he also arrogates the power to destroy him.

The profound influence exercised for more than a century by the personalist current succeeded in putting a brake on these trends for more than a moment. Unfortunately, however, in many contexts contemporary man is increasingly seen as an individual. Under Hobbes' influence, he is also often presented as an individual who is afraid of other individuals. Because of his existence itself, the "other" is perceived as a threat to my own existence.[14] Man is a wolf preying on man. We are currently at war, a war of all against all, and in this fight for life the strongest necessarily triumph over the weakest.

This concept of man strongly influences programs hostile to the family and to human procreation. In fact, if man is a wolf preying on man, there is no longer room for natural forms of solidarity. In their most intimate relations, men and women behave as individuals and each one

[14] The tendency to exalt, in the reciprocal complementarity of the man and the woman, only the aspects of disharmony and polemics tends not only to destroy the natural and constitutive relationship between the sexes but succeeds in adulterating the true meaning of sex for the personality ("Gender, imposed by culture or arbitrarily chosen by the person himself") (cf. Gender, in Lexicon, nn. 399-408; New definitions of gender, ibid, nn. 625-641. Sexual Identity and Difference, ibid, nn. 907-914.

seeks the most intense pleasure or the greatest usefulness for himself. The very acts ordered to procreation are thus subordinated to the search for pleasure and usefulness of individuals. Therefore, from the moment in which the man and the woman are reduced to being only individuals, they risk coming into conflict at any moment.

By uniting themselves in the full, reciprocal gift of self, people become ever closer to one another while nevertheless preserving their own identity. The spouses' union is reinforced and deepened in this expression of loving reciprocity.[15] Carnal union, of an individualistic character, itself becomes an occasion for disputes or fighting, to the extent that one of the partners does not consider him/herself satisfied at the level of pleasure or of usefulness.

Therefore, it is not by chance that, after Engels, the feminist movements exacerbated the polemic character of the relationship between male or female individuals, demanding that the family be superseded so that the woman could free herself from male oppression and motherhood and affirm her individuality unhindered.[16]

Thus it can be seen that a purely individualistic concept of the man and the woman, in opposition to the family, is incompatible with an authentic inter-generational solidarity. In fact, this has been practiced in the family from the outset on three levels: between the husband and wife themselves, above them in relations with their parents, and below them in relations with their children.

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[15] Cf. Gratissimam Sane, n. 8: "In marriage man and woman are so firmly united as to become -- to use the words of the Book of Genesis -- 'one flesh' (Gen 2:24). Male and female in their physical constitution, the two human subjects, even though physically different, share equally in the capacity to live 'in truth and love'",

[16] A feminism with initially positive intentions, laudable from the Christian viewpoint, has tended to absolutize partial and individualistic aspects, corrupting the original motive of promoting the dignity of women. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). founded by the United Nations in 1979, is an eloquent example.

On (he basis of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, in 1979 the General Assembly of the United Nations Organization adopted CEDAW with praiseworthy intentions. However, in 1999, the same General Assembly approved an Optional Protocol of CEDAW that authorized a Committee to exert pressure on the States that had subscribed to this Protocol, against (true or alleged) violations of the CEDAW norms.

Indeed, this Committee has made a distorted interpretation of CEDAW's original intention by seeking "to modify the socio-cultural patterns of conduct and to change the traditional structure of the family". It intervenes in various countries to demand changes in legislation, committing serious interference in their cultural and spiritual context. Without any vision worthy of the family, it exalts certain individual rights of women as absolutely superior to the rights of spouses and of unborn children. It despises motherhood and even regards it as slavery for women; it propagates abortion as an absolute right; it defends the sterilization of women without the prior consent of their husbands.

The Committee, without any kind of anthropology worthy of women or men, seems essentially to dishonor CEDAW's primary intention (to eliminate discrimination against women) and to promote "professions" which, even if they are practiced "voluntarily", are in and of themselves a degradation and a radical discrimination against women (cf. the amply documented facts in the article Discrimination against women and CEDAW, in Lexicon, pp. 217-226.

9. All this indicates that the problem of the family and responsible procreation must be faced in its totality.

To be able to move ahead, it will first be useful to take a few steps back. In our case, having limited space, it is appropriate to take into account certain documents, starting with the Second Vatican Council. The Council was certainly the most important ecclesial event in the last century whose potential and resources have not yet been exhausted. In the Pastoral Constitution Gaudium et Spes, among the "more urgent" problems, that of the dignity of marriage and the family and its promotion, and the "responsible transmission" of life as a gift of God entrusted to men are mentioned:

> "God, the Lord of life, has entrusted to men the noble mission of safeguarding life, and men must carry it out in a manner worthy of themselves... . When it is a question of harmonizing married love with the responsible transmission of life, it is not enough to take only the good intention and the evaluation of motives into account; the objective criteria must be used, criteria drawn from the nature of the human person and human action, criteria which respect the total meaning of mutual self-giving and human procreation in the context of true love; all this is possible only if the virtue of married chastity is seriously practiced. In questions of birth regulation the sons of the Church, faithful to these principles, are forbidden to use methods disapproved of by the teaching authority of the Church in its interpretation of the divine law".[17]

The text refers in a footnote to the previous documents of Popes Pius XI and Pius XII. In the passage cited, we find the essential lines of our topic of responsible procreation: human life proceeds from God and is entrusted to man within a family[18] to transmit it through human procreation, very different from the other forms of the transmission of life. Based on this conciliar guideline, there are many developments of this topic both in the Encyclicals Humanae Vitae (1968) and Evangelium Vitae (1995) as well as in other documents, including, among the more recent, the Catechism of the Catholic Church and the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church. This document of ours, taking into account all those that precede it, proposes to add several considerations and to integrate the three dimensions of responsible procreation: family, social and ecclesial.

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[17] Gaudium et Spes, n. 51.

[18] Cf. Centesimus Annus, n. 39: "It is necessary to go back to seeing the family as the sanctuary of life. The family is indeed sacred: it is the place in which life -- the gift of God -- can be properly welcomed and protected against the many attacks to which it is exposed, and can develop in accordance with what constitutes authentic human growth. In the face of the so-called culture of death, the family is the heart of the culture of life".

CHAPTER I: PROCREATION

The wisdom of peoples and the human value of descendance

10. The human individual is a cultural being who by his nature desires to know himself; but as both an individual and a member of society, he does not formulate his questions starting from zero. Nature itself directs him from within through natural inclinations. These bring him to the goods consonant with his nature. Before questioning himself about himself, he knows many things about himself, and before discovering that he is a family being, he finds himself in the family into which he is born, grows, lives and dies.[19] Family life is his beginning, his center of gravity and of development. This applies to all human beings and for all times, in the past and in the present, and it will apply in the future since man is motivated precisely by his human nature and its profound inclinations. It is not necessary to involve the whole past but a glance at history is useful, in the certainty of universality, to confirm the reality of the family as the place for the human transmission of life. Historia magistra vitae.

The history of culture offers countless testimonies of all peoples, from distant antiquity, on the fundamental importance attributed to the family. In Greek culture, the importance of procreation, of the education of children and of the transmission of values to the various generations already appears in the constitution of the Polis, the City, as the basic political structure of the ancient Greek world. In Plato's philosophical texts, the relationship between the family institution and society was already the object of thought. Aristotle affirms the priority of the family over the organization of society. The family is a natural institution founded on the love between a man and a woman which precedes, nourishes and forms the citizens who constitute the political communitv.[20]

For classical Rome, the social value of the family was recognized from very early on. Cicero, in De Officiis, says that a common property of all creatures is the reproductive instinct. Among human beings, the first form of society is formed in the enlarged family, with the ancestors and children, united in a vital space and in communion of goods. This is the first principle of the City and, so to speak, the cradle of the State: Principium urbis et quasi seminarium rei publicae. The origins of the State lie in this spreading and propagating of descendance.[21]

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[19] PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE, Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, (English edition) Vatican City 2004, n. 212: "The family has central importance in reference to the person. It is in this cradle of life and love that people are born and grow; when a child is conceived, society receives the gift of a new person who is called 'from the innermost depths of self to communion with others and to the giving of self to others'" (cf. JOHN PAUL II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, Christifideles Laici, n. 40).

[20] Cf. Gratissimam Sane, n. 7: "The family has always been considered as the first and basic expression of man's social nature. Even today this way of]ooking at things remains unchanged. Nowadays, however, emphasis tends to be laid on how much the family, as the smallest and most basic human community, owes to the personal contribution of a man and a woman. The family is in fact a community of persons whose proper way of existing and living together is communion: communion personarum".

[21] Cf. ARISTOTLE, Ethica ad Nicomacum, 8, 12, 1162-a 6-8; CICERO, De Officiis, I,54.

Christian Rome, the Western Middle Ages and the Christian East developed family life and the education of children in conformity with the model inspired by the Gospel. The apostolic texts highlight the importance of the family in the dissemination of the Christian message. History documents the influence that the Gospel has had on the evolution of life and on family legislation down the centuries, as well as the rich witness of a great many Christian fathers and mothers. On other occasions it has been monks, great educators of barbarian peoples and subsequently a reference point of all Christian life; they contributed as well to the development of Christian families; this was precisely because life in the monastery, governed by the abbot and ordered to the development of brotherhood among the monks, served as a paradigm or model for the unity and development of families. One could continue to list examples with references to great Christian figures, from the beginning of the modern epoch to our day.

The Enlightenment elaborated a disintegrating criticism of many concepts deemed "traditional" and obsolete. Man reaches the age of reason and should dare to think for himself. He must liberate himself. The category of nature should be replaced by the category of freedom. Kant affirms this in many ways. In fact, the dream of modern man is to replace the institution. What matters is not knowing what nature has done to me, but rather knowing what I can do with my freedom. Nevertheless, Western thought, in Kant himself and also in Hegel, has continued to recognize the transcendence of the family and of procreation.[22] Certain tendencies of contemporary philosophy, especially personalism, have recognized, more forcefully than in past ages, both the interpersonal value of sexual life and the fact that procreation necessarily surpasses the level of a purely biological or solely educational "act", thereby attaining the anthropological sphere.

The analysis of other cultural traditions, in Asia, Africa and America, different from those we have analyzed so far, leads to a similar observation. We find profound differences in many aspects, but always -- apart from a few exceptions -- perceive an appreciation of family life, of sexuality and of the origins of life, often linked to the world of the sacred. Recognition of the transcendence of the family and of procreation, because of its contribution and service to humanity, is in no way exclusive to Western culture.[23]

A close analogy between family and State was deemed for thousands of years one of the principal characteristics of traditional Chinese culture.[24]

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[22] Cf. KANT, Anthropology from a pragmatic point of view, Königsberg, 1798, Prologue.

[23] If we consider the great civilizations of India, we see that the Upanishads and the BhagavadGita contain multiple expressions of respect and admiration for the dawning of human life in the family. The political and social system of China remained founded on family projects for several millennia.

[24] Despite these optimistic notes, the threat of unforeseeable consequences in opposition to these eminent historical and traditional values cannot be concealed. In both India and China, the nefarious "infanticide of female infants" (not yet born) is increasing and has rapidly reached alarming dimensions. The Final Declaration of the Bishop Presidents of the Episcopal Commissions for the Family of Asia, at the Meeting which took place in Rome from 23 to 25 May 1995, calls the world's attention to this problem (cf. PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE FAMILY, Enchiridion on the Family: A Compendium of Church Teaching on Family and Life Issues from Vatican II to the Present, 1965-2004, Ed. Dehoniaoc, Bologna 2004, n. 2653.

One of the pillars of the Egyptian civilization was the family, characterized by a harmonious domestic life with numerous children. In African cultures too, there are frequent references, dating from the most remote antiquity, to the recognized value of the family and procreation. In his Apologetica Historia, Bartolomé de Las Casas gathers numerous testimonies on families and on the education of children in the cultures of pre-Columbian America. These are accounts of the human value of descendance as it was forged by the wisdom of ancient peoples and the great civilizations.[25]

The history of humanity remains ever incomplete. Furthermore, in the human city, there are certainly the testimonies of the magnalia hominis, but also those of wretchedness and disasters, both of the individual and of cultures and peoples themselves. Tares grow among the wheat and vices are more visible than virtues. Yet, despite the difficulties, the human being has always sought and continues to seek the good of the species in procreation and in the family. This is not only because every individual person, knowing he is mortal, seeks in children the immortality of the species, but also because an awareness of the value of life is inherent in the human being and because men and women experience love and know the joy that the arrival of a child brings.

Anthropology and human begetting: becoming parents

11. The universal observation of the reality of the family as an original nucleus of human life must have a cause. Intelligence quenches the thirst for truth when it arrives at the causes of phenomena. The technological and scientific culture in which we are immersed seems to be satisfied with the discovery of existing realities without questioning itself about their foundation. Born from the tradition of the Enlightenment, the waves of relativism and nihilism in vogue today prohibit any attempt to seek beyond the level of the phenomenal. This relativism and this nihilism lead to a radical subjectivism. From the moment when objective moral reference points no longer exist, the individual conscience fabricates its own norms and modifies them at the individual's pleasure; hence the tendency to self-destruction which was denounced earlier.

Although this attitude influences the current cultural situation, it must not make us forget the previously-mentioned universal value of family life and the passion for the transmission of life, or the need to ask oneself about one's raison d'etre. This raison d'etre is found in human nature itself, as it was created by God. Man was created for love, capable of loving. He was created male and female; the bodies and souls of men and women are complementary and correlative, capable of making a gift of themselves and of finding in children a projection and a meaning for their existence. Made for love, formed with their respective sexual difference, they give rise to life shared in marriage and in the family.[26]

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[25] Thus, these values, fundamental elements of the family, protected and promoted by very many pre-Christian cultures, express their deep anchorage in human nature itself. However, history also shows that no culture was able to live these values without being sorrowfully mingled with elements degrading to human dignity. Only the revelation of human dignity as an image of God was able to teach the equal dignity of all human people and their absolute and sacred value.

[26] "The human being is made for love and cannot live without love. When it is manifested as the total gift of two persons in their complementarities, love cannot be reduced to emotions or feelings, much less to

With this perspective in view, the error at the root of the deviations mentioned earlier stands out. In the face of the separation and opposition between nature, love and freedom, it is necessary to return to their profound interpenetration. Indeed, in human nature, constituted by body and by spiritual soul, corporeity itself is formed from within by the spiritual soul; it is thus constituted as a reality in which the spirit manifests itself. The return of human freedom to its own house, soundly founded on its nature, is one of the urgent tasks for the recovery of authentic human freedom. Man's nature is at the root both of corporeity, with which he communicates not only with bodies but also with persons, and of the spirituality that raises him above all the beings of the world. The lex naturalis, a participation in the eternal law, offers us the foundation both for sexuality, for the love between a man and a woman, and for the whole of family life.

Human procreation is at the same time similar and profoundly different from the procreation of other living beings. Human procreation, in fact, involves three levels of reality on which we must reflect: corporeity, the difference between the sexes, and cooperation with God.

Human corporeity

12. Man, who can be defined as a synthesis of the universe and quodammodo omnia,[27] is a "compound" of body and soul. The body is part of the essence of the human being. Today this truth meets sometimes with difficulties, sometimes with misunderstandings. The paradox exists of a culture which, on the one hand, is becoming more and more materialistic so as to leave no room for the spirit, to the point that it forgets the soul and, on the other hand, wants to make man a pure freedom where there is no room for the object body. It is necessary instead to recognize without hesitating that man is soul and body, a composite being, and that he has a part in the world through his body. In his being and in his becoming, he belongs to this world and is subject to the laws of matter and of life.

This corporeal condition, formed of flesh and bone and assumed through the reality of the soul to a spiritual order, is a good and a perfection. Man is not just any being but, also bodily, a being of great nobility, since his is the most perfect body and is, as it were, the purpose of the material world, the anthropic principle at the service of which God has disposed all the other bodies. When God was made man, he took our flesh.

However, corporeity is also a limitation. Man is mortal, subject to disease and weakness, he must bear wretchedness and is also a burden to others. Corporeity implies that in this world complete happiness is not possible and that shortcomings and evils can appear more numerous than good things. Lotario dei Conti di Segni was able to write his famous treatise De miseria

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mere sexual expression... the truth of conjugal love and sexuality exist where there is a full and total gift of persons, with the characteristics of unity and fidelity" (n. 223), PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE, Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, op. cit., Vatican 2004; "Conjugal love is by its nature open to the acceptance of life. The dignity of the human being, called to proclaim the goodness and fruitfulness that come from God, is eminently revealed in the task of procreation" (n. 230), ibid, nn. 223, 230.

[27] Cf. ARISTOTLE, De anima, 3, 421 b 20.

conditionis humanae but did not have the time to write, as he had promised himself, the complementary book on human dignity.[28] However, by virtue of the order that the soul imprints on the body, corporeity participates in the supreme and eternal good of man. In this context, sexuality too is one of the great gifts of corporeity.

The diversity of the sexes

13. Sexuality follows the corporeal condition of man. The human person has a sex, male or female. Since antiquity, people have reflected on the sexual difference, stressing its importance and anthropological significance, to a greater or lesser extent. Moreover, it is certain that until the middle of the last century, the profound biological root of the sexual difference was unknown. Since the time of Hippocrates, the only criterion consisted of the components of corporeity, seen from the outside. Modern biology has gone further and has made an analysis not only of the fabrica corporis humani, but also of the cells that are the basic unit of living beings. The sex of the person can be discovered in the chromosomes of each cell: XX for the female and XY for the male. Both are of the human species and have equal dignity. Biologically and psychologically, in many aspects, the woman seems stronger. The differences between the two are in any case constitutive, radical and reciprocal. Sexuality is complementary: the man is attracted by the woman and the woman by the man. Sexuality transcends the biological factor and becomes psychological, interpersonal. Nature itself involves both when between them arise friendship and love as the gift of self and the means of having children. Thus love between a man and a woman is the basis of marriage while marriage, in turn, is the basis of the human family that transmits life to the children and educates them for social life. The man and the woman are parents called to fatherhood and motherhood in a way that surpasses all the other ways of transmitting life in the world.[29]

Man collaborates with God the Creator

14. Human procreation also entails a transcendent innovation, an essential element that does not proceed from the male or the female but from God the Creator, and is designated as soul. Without the soul there is no human being, because the soul is the form that gives being and unifies its elements.. The existence of the soul was analyzed by Aristotle in his first treatise on the soul, in which the Stagirite affirms that its existence is true and obvious in operations that transcend matter, such as thinking and decision-making. It must be recognized that the Greek philosopher does not manage to perceive the full spirituality and transcendence of the soul as Christian tradition has made it known. Indeed, it is one thing to perceive in some way that a principle exists which is called soul; it is another to know its essence which is actually more difficult; however, Aristotle's argument comes very close to touching the truth.[30]

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[28] Cf. Lotario dei Conti di Segni, the future Innocent III, De miseria conditionis humanae, published in Naples, 1967.
[29] Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Uomo e donna lo creó, Città Nuova - Libreria Editrice Vaticana, RomeVatican City 1992.
[30] ARISTOTLE, De anima, II, 1; SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS, Questiones de anima, 1. ST, 1 87.1.

The parents transmit the heritage of the human genome of the individual but they cannot provide the soul. If the soul is present in every individual, it can only come from God the Creator. The soul forms corporeity from within and gives to the whole body its human existence. The word "procreation" allows one to glimpse the presence and participation of God, "from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named" (Eph 3:14) at the beginning of every human life. This collaboration raises procreation even higher. In the conception of every human being, in a certain way, that "Faciamus hominem" (Gn 1:26) is repeated, which God spoke in creating the first man.

CHAPTER II: THE FAMILY, THE PLACE OF PROCREATION

The transmission of life and the dignity of the human person

15. There is no doubt that the affirmation of the dignity of the person is one of the richest and most important realities of contemporary civilization. Kant indicates the difference between a thing and a person; the former is a means, the latter is always an end.[31] The thing has a price and can be exchanged, the person has an infinite value and does not admit of exchange with anything else. Christian thought not only assumes this consideration but also shows its foundation: the human person has an infinite value because he is an image of God; and, especially, because he is loved by God. In Christian dogma the concept is also applied to the Persons of the Trinity and subsequently also to the human being. There are three characteristics of personal reality: being a unique and unrepeatable whole, having a spiritual nature, subsisting autonomously, and, consequently, being endowed with freedom. The person, therefore, possesses the highest dignity.

Human dignity is a central, absolute criterion because it is independent of almost any human authority. "Being in the image of God the human individual possesses the dignity of a person, who is not just something, but someone".[32] The person can never be considered an object but he is an end, for "man is the only creature on earth that God has wanted for its own sake".[33] In the light of this criterion it is possible to explain many related problems.[34]

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[31] Cf. KANT, Metaphysics of Morals, Part two.
[32] Catechism of the Catholic Church, n. 357.
[33] Gaudium et Spes, n. 24.
[34] Before the Second Vatican Council, Romano Guardini, the famous theologian, was already exalting the eminent quality of being a person and not a thing: "The personality gives man his dignity. A thing has consistency but not autonomy; it causes effects but has no responsibility; it has value but no dignity. It is treated as a thing in that it is possessed, it is used, and in the end is destroyed or -- in the case of the human being -- killed. The prohibition against killing man expresses in the most acute form the prohibition against treating him as though he were a thing" (cf. ROMANO GUARDINI, Il diritto alla vita prima della nascita, in Opera Omnia, VI, Scritti politici, Morcelliana, p. 394). The obligatory conclusion is therefore: "Respect for man, as a person, is one of the demands that admits of no dispute: on it depend his dignity but also his well being, and, in the end, the duration of humanity" (cf. ROMANO GUARDINI, op. cit., p. 395).

The consideration of man as a person, a being endowed with inalienable dignity, is deeply united with the affirmation of the value and dignity of the family, the primary and fundamental moment of social life and the milieu in which life is called to be transmitted and to grow in love.[35]

Many and very important consequences derive from this. Let us recall one of them, directly connected with our topic: "The human being", as the Instruction Donum Vitae affirms, "is to be... treated as a person from the moment of conception".[36] Starting from this principle, the Instruction denounces genetic manipulation, both with regard to the use of embryos and to intervention, through artificial insemination or fertilization "in vitro", in the process of fertilization.[37] The human being as a person endowed with dignity has a right to be begotten and not produced, and not to come to life by virtue of an artificial process but through a human act in the full meaning of the term: the union between a man and a woman, ordered by its very nature to be inspired by love.

Donum Vitae, in examining several biomedical or bioethical issues, stresses as the central idea that the satisfactory place for human procreation is in marriage which founds the family and within marriage, in conjugal love, the reciprocal gift of the spouses who form "one flesh" (Gen

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[35] Let us say it with the words of the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church: "Enlightened by the radiance of the biblical message, the Church considers the family as the first natural society, with underived rights that are proper to it, and places it at the center of social life... The family, in fact, is born of the intimate communion of life and love founded on the marriage between one man and one woman. It possesses its own specific and original social dimension, in that it is the principal place of interpersonal relationships, the first and vital cell of society... It is in this cradle of life and love that people are born and grow... In the climate of natural affection which unites the members of a family unit, persons are recognized and learn responsibility in the wholeness of their personhood" (nn. 211-212).

[36] Cf. CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, Instruction Donum Vitae, 1987, I, n. 1. Concerning the topic of human procreation, the Instruction Donum Vitae is particularly important. It is cited several times in the Encyclical Evangelium Vitae, since it is in this perspective that it should be interpreted. It explains clear criteria concerning the inviolable dignity of the beginning of human life. It possesses special magisterial authority, since was approved by the Holy Father John Paul II and signed by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger and by Archbishop Alberto Bovone.

[37] Techniques of fertilization *in vitro* can open the way to other forms of biological and genetic manipulation of human embryos, such as attempts or plans for fertilization between human and animal gametes and the gestation of human embryos in the uterus of animals, or the hypothesis or project of constructing artificial uteruses for the human embryo. These procedures are contrary to the human dignity proper to the embryo, and at the same time they are contrary to the right of every person to be conceived and to be born within marriage and from marriage. Also, attempts or hypotheses for obtaining a human being without any connection with sexuality through 'twin fission', cloning or parthenogenesis are to be considered contrary to the moral law, since they are in opposition to the dignity both of human procreation and of the conjugal union. The freezing of embryos, even when carried out in order to preserve the life of an embryo -- cryopreservation -- constitutes an offense against the respect due to human beings by exposing them to grave risks of death or harm to their physical integrity and depriving them, at least temporarily, of maternal shelter and gestation, thus placing them in a situation in which further offenses and manipulation are possible. Certain attempts to influence chromosomal or genetic inheritance are not therapeutic but are aimed at producing human beings selected according to sex or other predetermined qualities. These manipulations are contrary to the personal dignity of the human being and his or her integrity and identity. Therefore in no way can they be justified on the grounds of possible beneficial consequences for future humanity" (*Donum Vitae*, I, n. 6).

2:24), becoming fathers and mothers through fruitful love. "A truly responsible procreation vis-á-vis the unborn child must be the fruit of marriage".[38]

We can develop these considerations further by emphasizing -- in relation to the words of the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, cited earlier -- that the human being has a right not only to be begotten but to be begotten in the environment of a family. Only the family, a reality that results from love since a man and a women give themselves to each other, is the satisfactory environment for a new human being to come to life in, that is, a being endowed with dignity and called to be loved.

Therefore, as it is summed up in Donum Vitae, "The moral relevance of the link between the meanings of the conjugal act and between the goods of marriage, as well as the unity of the human being and the dignity of his origin, demand that the procreation of a human person be brought about as the fruit of the conjugal act specific to the love between spouses".[39] It follows that procreation must always take place within the family.

Responsible fatherhood and motherhood

16. The appearance of the term "responsibility" in reference to procreation is a recent event. In the past millennia, even when the term was absent, the concept was not absent, yet the responsibility of procreating was expressed in the readiness to welcome every child who emerged into life and in taking charge of his upbringing. The development of knowledge in relation to the biological processes through which the transmission of human life occurs has brought with it a new situation and, along with this, the need to reflect anew on the responsibility that devolves on the man and the woman with regard to procreation. The term "responsible parenthood" or "responsible procreation" has therefore appeared in Catholic moral reflection in relatively recent times, with a meaning that is extremely precise and very different from the one that was being put forward in the Western world -- but not only -- under the name of Birth Control or Family Planning.

At the root of the concept of responsibility in the transmission of human life, the Second Vatican Council places the concept of procreation as a collaboration with the love of God the Creator, from which, for spouses, their condition as "collaborators of God" derives. The description "interpreters" of God's love paves the way to further and precise requirements. Indeed, if spouses are to be able "to interpret" that love, they must know what, in practice, is God's plan for them as parents; in other words, they must ponder on what is required of them, today, concerning their responsibility as spouses and possible parents. Any selfish attitude is therefore excluded, and especially any attitude opposed to life, and the spouses are asked to consider seriously and responsibly what God is asking of them.

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[38] Donum Vitae, II, A, n. 1. "For this reason marriage possesses specific goods and values in its union and in procreation which cannot be likened to those existing in lower forms of life" (Donum Vitae, Introduction, n. 3).
[39] Donum Vitae, II, B, n. 4c.

The organic connection between the teachings of the Council and those of Paul VI in the Encyclical Humanae Vitae is of notable consistence and depth. For the solution of the moral problem of responsible fatherhood and motherhood, that is, for a well-grounded evaluation of the morality of the various forms of sexual behavior of the couple, the Pastoral Constitution Gaudium et Spes has taken the care to formulate the basic criterion to which the couple should refer. And it does so in two ways: first, by formulating a criterion of general importance which applies to every context of human action:

> "It is not enough to take only the good intention and the evaluation of motives into account; the objective criteria must be used, criteria drawn from the nature of the human person and human action...".[40]

Secondly, this general criterion applies to the reality of marriage: it indicates the need to actuate "in the context of true love", and in such a way that it is respected, "the total meaning of mutual self-giving and human procreation";[41] but concretely, excluding -- as Humanae Vitae was to affirm -- every means of contraception and respecting the union between the unitive and the procreative element in every conjugal act, the legitimacy of periodic continence (that is, the use of the marriage only in the non-fertile periods) when there are proportionate causes.

Procreation and conjugal morality

17. The estimative criterion of procreative responsibility spelled out by the Second Vatican Council involves on the one hand recognizing that the newly acquired medical knowledge brings with it a situation in which the spouses are called to examine their responsibility with regard to procreation more closely than in the past. On this assumption, this criterion presents two aspects: one, so to speak, negative, and the other positive. The negative aspect consists in asserting that mere deliberation does not suffice to affirm as licit the subsequent behavior of the spouses. The positive aspect consists in affirming that it is necessary to base the moral evaluation of behavior on the reality of the person and of his acts (and it is obvious that here the act is the conjugal act).

The moral doctrine expounded in Humanae Vitae is in a consistent continuation with that of the Council and is none other than its concretization or development. On these same lines are the subsequent documents of the Magisterium, among which it is necessary to point out Familiaris Consortio and the various addresses and messages of John Paul II, in which he stressed the radical theological and anthropological differences that intervene between contraception and these natural methods.[42] In the former case this affirmation of rationality and selfish individualism that we have already criticized is present. In the latter, an attitude of openness and confidence in the divine will is found, as it is known by the judgment of a formed and responsible conscience.

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[40] Gaudium et Spes, n. 51.
[41] Gaudium et Spes, n. 51. Cf. Responsible Parenthood in Lexicon, pp. 809-815.
[42] Cf. Humanae Vitae, n. 16.

Of great importance is the teaching of the Encyclical Humanae Vitae, whose prophetic and anthropological value was clearly proved by the Apostolic Exhortation Familiaris Consortio.

It defends the principle of totality, that is, the understanding of the unity between the unitive sense and the procreative sense (Humanae Vitae, n. 12); it fully retains its validity, precisely because the gift of self between the spouses is total and calling it into question means introducing something that seriously damages the clarity of the self-giving. Reducing this totality leads to a betrayal of love, which instead should be open to life.

Humanae Vitae places the vocation to parenthood in the context of the economic, psychological and social conditions; responsible parenthood is exercised both "by those who prudently and generously decide to have more children, and by those who, for serious reasons and with due respect to moral precepts, decide not to have additional children for either a certain or an indefinite period of time" (Humanae Vitae, n. 10).

In the decades subsequent to 1968, the problem also underwent a profound evolution at the level of the couple. Previously, it was expressed in terms of how to regulate the couple's fertility honestly. Today it is imposed in relation to the great world issues cited and, in the rich countries which consequently make an important impact and have had contraception advertising campaigns, as an issue oriented to decreasing the local population and as a result, a problem of how to stimulate fertility effectively.[43]

As a result, a change in the model of the family and also of conjugality is under way. Indeed, the situation of spouses with a single child or at most two children predominates. This means that the fulfillment of potentially procreative conjugal acts is no more than a sort of sum of brief parentheses within an entire conjugal life voluntarily rendered sterile. This fact obviously indicates a serious obscuring of the value of procreation. Then, looking at the means to which people resort to avoid having children, which not only include contraception but also abortion, the eclipse today of every reference to God in the prevalent vision of responsible procreation appears clear: hence the need for an unambiguous, decisive and integral explanation of the Christian doctrine on the family, sexuality and procreation.

CHAPTER III: THE FAMILY AND INTEGRAL PROCREATION

The person and integral procreation

18. Paul VI, on a pilgrimage to Nazareth, invited Christian families to imitate the Holy Family: "May Nazareth teach us what family life is, its communion of love, its austere and simple beauty,

[43] The following is a synthesis of the fertility rate, that is, the number of children per woman of child-bearing age: England 1.7; Italy 1.3; Spain 1.3; Poland 1.2.

and its sacred and inviolable character".[44] On his part, John Paul II presented to the family the model of the Trinitarian mystery: "[There is a profound and beautiful saying that] our God, in his innermost mystery, is not a loneness but a family, since God embodies paternity, filiation, and the essence of the family that is love".[45] They both teach us that love is the architect of the family and that love is always fertile, as a root of procreation in the process of growth towards fullness of children. The mystery of the human family, which Saint Paul tells us is great, helps us to rise high, to the knowledge of the Trinitarian mystery, which, in turn, illumines the reality of the human family.

Procreation, however, as an exercise of fatherhood and motherhood, is not limited to conception as a consequence of the union of the man and the woman in the sexual act, since conception is only the normal beginning of a long process in which the work of God and the work of man continues.[46] On the one hand, God's work continues in what we call nature. But the tasks entrusted to man for man begin once conception and finally birth and the child's separation from the mother have occurred. The first task is that of begetting, then there are another two fundamental tasks that cannot be achieved without careful family integration: the nourishment of the body and education. This process can be designated as integral human procreation.

In the process of the promotion of children, the primacy of the subject must be taken into account. Human development is not obtained in the way that a house is built, adding brick upon brick, but in a way similar to that in which a plant is cultivated, by nurturing the capacities of the subject. Educating means encouraging the possibilities of the person being educated. True human formation cannot be mass-produced; it requires the care of every individual. External agents are necessary, but they must all be at the service of the person. "I planted, [another] watered, but God gave the growth" (cf. 1 Cor 3:6-7).

The development of human potential takes place in a very special way, particularly in the first phases of family life in whose context man learns to be man in life and in culture. Each family member contributes to the growth and promotion of the others. In the Middle Ages it was taught that the mother fulfilled five roles in relation to the child, similar to the roles incumbent on "Mother Church" in relation to the faithful: she conceives him, bears him in her womb, holds him in her arms, gives him her milk, brings him to the table of the father. It is the task of the latter, however, to forge the child's personality by his example, authority and the appropriate words in the various situations. The image has changed with the times but can serve as a description of functions and roles. And it should not be forgotten that all this development is completed at school, where the teachers make their contribution of a cultural kind, providing what the family is unable to give.

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[44] In: Catechism of the Catholic Church, n. 533.
[45] JOHN PAUL II, Homily at a celebration of the Eucharist at the Seminario Palafoxiano, Puebla de los Angeles, Mexico, 28 January 1979.
[46] Cf. Gratissimam Sane, n. 7: "The task involves the spouses in living out their original covenant. The children born to them -- and here is the challenge -- should consolidate that covenant, enriching and deepening the conjugal communion of the father and mother".

Being father and mother involves the gift of self in transmitting life and encouraging people. The rule of the parents' conduct, so often heroic and self-sacrificing through faithfulness to God and love for their children, is comparable to that of John the Baptist: "He must increase, but I must decrease" (Jn 3:30). Procreation is integral when the child is introduced into life in such a way that he develops totally and his 'natural capacities are strengthened through the acquisition of the virtues and the arts. The family, and in collaboration with it the school, are the appropriate places for initiation into the integrally human values. Saint Thomas describes these tasks of parents who nourish and educate their children using the image of the maternal uterus. For the child, his family and home are comparable to a uterus spiritualis.[47]

To bring this hoped for integral procreation to completion it is necessary to bear in mind that the family members are people. No other institution so forcefully requires this condition. The family demands interpersonal relations between its members. This is easy to say but more difficult to achieve. The human individual is always, from his beginning to his end, a person. The human being, as was said earlier, needs to be treated as such from his conception and, as is obvious, also from birth; and the smaller he is, the greater the care and protection he needs. Every child deserves special attention because he is a person. In the family, people are called by name, they sit round the same table and each eats the appropriate food for him (cf. Gaudium et Spes, n. 24).

The integral promotion of the person

19. The person is called to develop his personality. We can say that the person already exists while his personality is being formed. In fact, personalization indicates the specific profile that a subject assumes in the orientation of his own existence. Every personal subject possesses concrete and different attitudes that can be developed successfully. Education itself comprises a process of the reawakening and development of the potential of the subject that are manifest in his inclinations from childhood.

There are three complementary areas of development of the personality: the subjective, the objective and the projective. For this development there are three typically human activities: knowing, acting and doing. Within these horizons of the human, the personality can reach a very high level, in both knowledge and in wisdom, in the various arts and in praxis. The sage, the artist and the prudent person are the fruit of effort, natural talents and also of fortune. Man is capable of arriving at an ever higher degree of perfection. The time he spends in the family as a child and as a young person is crucial.

Habits serve for the perfection of humanity in man and also in his acts. However, the difference between the various habits and virtues and, more precisely, between intellectual habits and virtues properly speaking should not be forgotten. While intellectual and artistic habits are useful

[47] "Postquam ex utero egreditur, antequam usum liberi arbitrii habeat, contenetur sub parentum cura sicut sub-quodam spirituali utero" (having emerged from the urerus, before acquiring the use of free will, [the infant] is kept under the care of the parents as in a sort of spiritual uterus). Cf. SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS, Quodlibet., II, art. 2; and S. Th., II-II, q. 10, a. 12.

for doing things well but do not make the person good, it is the moral virtues, those of behavior, that make the person good. This is very important but today it is largely forgotten. The moral virtues must shape domestic life which is learned by imitation, with few words and healthy behavior. The personality of each individual must be developed in the uterus spiritualis that consists of the family and the home. From his parents and elders the child unconsciously acquires the foundations of culture, such as language and values, and the basic virtues, such as justice and religion. What is learned within the walls of the family home is not easily forgotten and what is not learned from the parents and family is assimilated with greater difficulty. Freud and many other more recent authors have emphasized the role played in the balance of his future personality by the child's experiences in his first socialization. The decisive factor is love and the interpersonal communion between family members.

Today parents have an obligatory task that requires fathers and mothers to be aware of their responsibility and alert to certain cultural tendencies of our time which can harm them. This is a twofold task. On the one hand, it is necessary to restore to the man an awareness of the sublimity of being a father. Influenced by the current individualism, the father tends to be merely a citizen who is older than his children. Since father and children enjoy the same rights, it follows that in democratic societies the solidarity between them is weakened. The period of childhood is tending to shrink since society is inclined to grant to everyone an ever greater number of individual rights. Consequently, if the natural forms of solidarity are to be recovered, it is vital that fathers learn anew how to be fathers. The father's solidarity with his own children implies that he can enable them to share in the basic traditional values. Likewise, it is necessary to restore to women the conviction of and the desire for the incomparable dignity of motherhood. Mothers must learn anew how to be mothers. They cannot be reduced to their utilitarian role as teachers of efficient children. By their very nature, women are inclined to prefer relations of love to utilitarian relations. And without jeopardizing the possibility of work outside the home, today not only customary but also necessary, this natural tendency must be maintained and developed.

CHAPTER IV: SOCIAL ASPECTS OF THE SERVICE TO THE FAMILY

Family and society

20. Through his personal condition, man becomes not only a family being but also a political and social being. In the course of history, this dimension is discovered on a parallel with the individual or personal dimension. The we is contemporary with the "I-you". The social and political dimension is discovered in two ways: negative, since no person is self-sufficient but needs others from the very first moment of his life until his death; positive, since the individual person communicates his capacities with others and is fulfilled "in a sincere giving of himself".[48]

[48] Gaudium et Spes, n. 24; Familaris Consortio, n. 11; cf. PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE FAMILY, The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality, n. 14.

In society the horizon of life opens to other dimensions. Human society presupposes the family and the family finds its fulfillment in society. A sort of circularity occurs; the family is ordered to society and society is ordered to the service of the family. On the one hand, the person and the family come first, and on the other, society is ordered to the common good of the person and of the family.[49]

The originality of the family, the fact that it is the prototype of every human society, has often been underlined in the teaching of the ecclesial Magisterium. This originality was given special emphasis by John XXIII, in particular in his Encyclical Pacem in Terris (1963), n. 9:

> "The family, founded upon marriage freely contracted, one and indissoluble, must be regarded as the natural, primary cell of human society. The interests of the family, therefore, must be taken very specially into consideration in social and economic affairs, as well as in the spheres of faith and morals. For all of these have to do with strengthening the family and assisting it in the fulfillment of its mission".

In the Catechism of the Catholic Church, society is described as "a group of persons bound together organically by a principle of unity that goes beyond each one of them. As an assembly that is at once visible and spiritual, a society endures through time: it gathers up the past and prepares for the future" (n. 1880). Belonging to its time and depending on a principle of unity that transcends the particularity of individuals makes the family a "common good".

John Paul II said in Evangelium Vitae: "Within the 'people of life and the people for life', the family has a decisive responsibility. This responsibility flows from its very nature as a community of life and love, founded upon marriage, and from its mission to 'guard, reveal and communicate love'. Here it is a matter of God's own love, of which parents are co-workers and as it were interpreters when they transmit life and raise it according to his fatherly plan" (n. 92).

Society needs to preserve, protect and encourage the family. Only in this way does it guarantee its own survival. The Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church says so clearly.

> "The starting point for a correct and constructive relationship between the family and society is the recognition of the subjectivity and the social priority of the family. Their intimate relationship requires that 'society should never fail in its fundamental task of respecting and fostering the family' (John Paul II, Letter to Families Gratissimam Sane, n. 17). Society, and in particular state institutions, respecting the priority and 'antecedence' of the family, is called to guarantee and foster the genuine identity of family life" (n.252).

Moreover, the family's public role is not only passive, as though it could passively expect care and protection from the civic institutions: it is also called to exercise its role actively. This active

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[49] SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS, Summa Theologiae, II-II, 64, 2: Quaelibet persona singularis comparator ad totam communitatem, sicut pars ad totum. Ibid, I-II, 21, 4 ad 3: Homo non ordinatur ad communitatem politicam, secundum se totum et secundum omnia sua.

exercise is not expressed only within the family with reciprocal fidelity and the proper exercise of the initially procreative and subsequently educative activity in the physical and spiritual succession of the generations.[50] Yet this, which is already a lot and is in itself a duty for the family, is not all. Indeed, the family is asked for a broader social and political sensibility that crosses the boundaries of the private dimension and extends to forms of effectiveness in public life. From this point of view it is obviously not by chance that the majority of the Fundamental Charters of many States in the world assume responsibility for defining the family. As distinct from all the other forms of group life, these Constitutions underline the family's own and therefore irreplaceable origin and role and outline areas for its protection and promotion, incomprehensible outside a perspective of privilege, motivated precisely by the decisive character of the tasks with which the family can and must contribute to the development and to the survival itself of civic well being.

The rights of the family

21. John Paul II described the family, among other ways, as a "community of persons", a "community of love and life", a "community of parents and children", a "community of generations". Other basic definitions can be added: a "basic social community" (Encyclical Sollicitudo Rei Socialis (1987], n. 33) and "a community of work and solidarity" (Encyclical Centesimus Annus (1991], n. 49). The Charter of the Rights of the Family, published by the Holy See on 22 October 1983, states: "The family, a natural society, exists prior to the State or any other community, and possesses inherent rights which are inalienable" (Preamble, D).

In all these definitions certain traits of family reality stand out. The first and also the clearest characteristic concerns the community dimension of the family. The family, however one may desire to present it and whichever aspect of it one may desire to mention to give it an empirical and essential definition, is a community. Its plural nature is therefore manifested as a co-essential disposition, a condition of the actual possibility of calling a specific form of life a family.

A second condition of the family institution concerns a very precise composition that introduces a discourse on the roles within the family which in a certain way constitute the matrix of the family and of every possible development within it. Natural law points out to us that the unique source of marriage and of life is the inclination profoundly inherent in nature between the man and the woman, and their consequent union. In this sense there is no family that is not the fruit of persons of different sex: hence, a matrimonial union.

Openness to life, or at least a potential openness, is a third essential characteristic of the family properly understood. Procreation is grafted within an affective context established by marriage and therefore already constituting a family by virtue of the permanent bonds that the spouses consciously desire to assume with marriage. The typical public character of the actual wedding

[50] Cf. Gaudium et Spes, n. 52; cf. P AUL VI, Encyclical Populorum Progressio (1967), n. 36. On intergenerational relations, see Intergenerational Solidarity, the important book published by the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, Vatican City 2002.

ceremony, which has existed since time immemorial and not only in the Christian culture and tradition, specifically emphasizes this feature of the assumption of a firm commitment and of the involvement of the wider community in the promise of fidelity on which the consolidation of the new family nucleus depends.

The juridical character of the family institution is confirmed by the presence within the family of those prerequisites of security (in the bonds between the couple and in the face of external abuse), of cooperation (a characteristic of the bonum coniugii) and of duration (existence within time) which on the phenomenological level configure every appearance of the juridical element. The family is a juridical institution, as the history of the institution itself demonstrates if one considers the age-old juridical configuration of marriage, and not only in archaic Roman law but also in other legal systems that have evolved from the juridical understanding of antiquity.

The rights of the family are closely connected with human rights: indeed, if the family is a communion of persons, its self-fulfillment depends significantly on the correct application of the rights of the individuals of which it is made up. Some of these rights directly concern the family in its specificity, such as the parents' right to responsible procreation and to the education of their offspring; other rights instead generically concern the family nucleus: among these the right to ownership is uniquely important, especially to so-called "family" property, and the right to work.

22. As a community of persons, the family is the "basic community of society". The public authorities must therefore protect it, because it comes before the State and any political organization. This essential protection has been the object of various explanations in the Church's teaching. In the beginning, this teaching quite rightly emphasized the bond between family, procreation and the parents' access to private property. Subsequently, the bond between the family, procreation and the parents' right to employment was stressed. Social events at the beginning of this 21st century have impelled the Church to denounce the abusive interference of the State in the education of children.

The Church recommends, to parents and to pastors in particular, great vigilance in the face of endeavors that tend to replace the teaching of chastity, such as can occur within the family or in the study of the catechism, with courses of sexual education which give rise to serious reservations. Procreating cannot be summed up in the transmission of biological life but also means formation in the moral and religious values. This presupposes recognition of the family's right to freedom of education, and especially, by virtue of the principle of subsidiarity,[51] that the freedom which parents must enjoy in order to raise their own children be protected by the State (cf. Pius XII, Encyclical Mit Brennender Sorge [1937], n. 39.

[51] Cf. The rights of the family on the threshold of the third millennium. Final Declaration of the participants in the Convention of European Politicians and Legislators, Varese, 8-10 March 1993, n. 6: "By virtue of the principle of subsidiarity, the State must respect the just autonomy of the family and beware of regimenting its internal life" (cf. L'Osservatore Romano, 24, April 1993, p. 4).

Moreover, this freedom of the parents which must be recognized in the context of the family's procreative role covers a truly vast range. If it reaches its culmination in the educative responsibility of parents, it must be respected and recognized from the very beginning of life. No constituted power, no State, no international organization can claim to dictate laws concerning the behavior of parents when for them it is a matter of fully transmitting life.

The right to life of unborn children

23. Abortion and infanticide underline the absence of any effective juridical protection of the conceived child. Indeed, these practices are a violation of the fundamental right to life that belongs to every human being from conception. The recent progress in genetics has actually led to the "precious confirmation" of the existence of individual life from fertilization. In particular, science itself is able today to observe the beginning of life, to reveal the transcendence of the phenomenon of the union of the gametes and to observe how it results in a new human being who is different from the people who begot him.

Despite this scientific evidence, many laws legalizing abortion prevent a fair defense of the dignity and life of every human individual. In this regard, the case of the "right to abortion" sanctioned by the verdict of the United States Supreme Court: Roe vs. Wade (1973)[52] is paradigmatic.

Unfortunately, this way of thinking is manifesting itself in other countries and other legislation. In these juridical systems, not all human beings are persons but only those for whom adequate protection is from time to time recognized. This means attributing to the State the right to decide who is and who is not a person, and treating human beings by applying the same rules that are applied to the animal kingdom. The State, in fact, protects other living beings by encouraging their development and possibly preventing and penalizing their destruction: species under the threat of extinction are preserved, cruelty to animals is punished and even the environment is protected. However, from this it cannot be deduced that whales, penguins or the environment are subjects possessing rights: they are protected or safeguarded by the juridical order as goods useful to man. They are not protected as subjects possessing rights but as objects. There is thus a substantial difference between the protection that the juridical order affords to the above-mentioned beings and its recognition of the rights possessed by human beings. It is consequently obvious that the protection assured to the unborn child from this point of view is improper and insufficient by its very nature because it is based on the denial of his juridical

[52] In this sentence, in fact, the Court degraded foetal life to a level lower than fully human life, thereby contradicting the very Constitution that imposes on the State the protection of every person's life in accordance with criteria of legality and justice. In an attempt to seek a balance between the interest of the woman having recourse to abortion and the interest of the State in protecting its own citizens, including unborn children, the Court decided to rate the value and protection of the foetus according to the stage of gestation it had reached. The sentence sanctions the woman's full right to privacy in the choice of abortion until the second trimester and extends this right to the third trimester should there be any threat to the life or to the psychological or physical health of the mother. In this way, in the face of the right exercised by his own mother, the child conceived has no possibility of being recognized as a person, that is, as a subject of law who in himself and for himself deserves legal protection on the part of the State.

personality in contradiction to an actual fact: the human way of being an individual is his personal way; the unborn child is a human being.[53]

The refusal to recognize the juridical personality of the unborn child does not accord with the multitude of international documents on the protection of human rights. Indeed, countless documents saw the light in the 20th century in the face of the universal emotion to which the sequence of wars and killings gave rise. World peace should be built, guaranteed and protected on the recognition of human rights for the entire human community. It was desired to avoid the repetition of such massacres by the recognition of a universal juridical status of the human person, a collection of rights that should be guaranteed for all people, regardless of the place where they live, the color of their skin or the physical, cultural or economic development they have attained. All these rights and guarantees derive from human dignity. Most appropriately, these international documents do not claim to attribute rights but to recognize them and declare them; in other words, they are based on the obvious fact that these rights are pre-existing and precede positive consecration. Thus, the State cannot but recognize them; but when, although it admits that it is dealing with a human individual, it refuses him the protection due to all the members of the species -- and this happens with pro-abortion legislation -- it is contradicting the very foundations of its existence as a State, that is, a juridical and social entity that protects the rights inherent in the nature of the individual and of society.

"By the authority which Christ conferred upon Peter and his Successors, in communion with the Bishops -- who on various occasions have condemned abortion and who in the aforementioned consultation, albeit dispersed throughout the world, have shown unanimous agreement concerning this doctrine -- I declare that direct abortion, that is, abortion willed as an end or as a means, always constitutes a grave moral disorder, since it is the deliberate killing of an innocent

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[53] PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE FAMILY, The Family and Human Rights, n. 29: "From the moment of his conception, he is always a person whose dignity must be recognized in every circumstance of his existential process". The practice of "partial birth abortion" is the application of philosophical relativism and juridical positivism: instead of allowing the child to be born head first, the abortionist changes his position and performs a partial breech delivery, delivering all of the foetus' body except for the head. Before the child emerges, his brains are sucked out through a suction tube inserted at the base of the head. Cf. Lexicon [op. cit., English edition], 733-743).

"Based precisely on the available biological data, we maintain that there is no significant reason that leads to denying that the embryo is already a person at this stage (of pre-implantation)" (Pontifical Academy for Life, Final Statement of the 12th General Assembly and the International Congress on: "The Human Embryo before Implantation. Scientific Update and Bioethical Considerations", February 27-28, 2006).

CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, Donum Vitae, 22 February 1987, I, n. 1, declares: "Certainly no experimental datum can be in itself sufficient to bring us to the recognition of a spiritual soul; nevertheless, the conclusions of science regarding the human embryo provide a valuable indication for discerning by the use of reason a personal presence at the moment of this first appearance of a human life: how could a human individual not be a human person?".

Cf. THE PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE FAMILY, Family and Human Rights (9 December 1999), nn. 28-29.

human being. This doctrine is based upon the natural law and upon the written Word of God, is transmitted by the Church's Tradition and taught by the ordinary and universal Magisterium.

No circumstance, no purpose, no law whatsoever can ever make licit an act which is intrinsically illicit, since it is contrary to the Law of God which is written in every human heart, knowable by reason itself, and proclaimed by the Church".[54]

Today people presume in a certain way to trivialize abortion on the pretext that the authorities should not penalize this abominable crime.[55] To follow this line would mean to belittle or deny the fact that a crime, by its very nature, requires punishment. It is inconceivable that a crime should remain unpunished. Another aspect of the matter refers to the following question: when the judge examines cases, he indeed has the possibility of seeing what the aggravating or attenuating circumstances are and of ruling accordingly. Trivializing abortion in this way would transform the crime into a right.[56]

The family, a link joining generations

24. An important indicator of the social value of the family is the capacity for strengthening the link between generations, in other words intergenerational relations. Research on this subject by sociologists tells us that we live in a society that is gradually losing both the sense of its own tradition and trust in the future. The younger generations in particular seem to have great difficulty in feeling they have been "generated" and in turn are capable of "generating". Whatever the reasons for this incapacity, one thing is certain: the family is the privileged place for safeguarding the meaning of the succession of generations. The habit of living with others, of sharing a home, possessions and affection, strengthens both the link with the small community to which the person belongs and his capacity for emancipation as an autonomous individual. The autonomous identity of every person depends in fact on the ability of each to speak about himself, to tell his own story as a part of other stories. Our individualistic epoch seems to have forgotten what this means, but the interminable genealogies of several passages in the Bible indicate, precisely, the chain of generations in which our identity is rooted. Forgetting this chain does not make people more autonomous or freer. And this is acutely felt by young people, who have often grown up in a historically (hence also ethically) neutral context, all too often without any brothers and sisters, with parents who in turn are bewildered and, like their children, are frequently desperately seeking their roots.

At the very moment when the family is strengthening the bond between generations, it is also carrying out another, very important social role: the role of safeguarding a community's traditions. After a long period of diffidence and hostility, the concept of tradition is rightly regaining a certain prestige in Western culture. Little by little we are realizing that it has a lot to do with the memory, identity and hope in the future of a community. We feel the need to

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[54] JOHN PAUL II, Evangelium Vitae, n. 62.
[55] "Life must be protected with the utmost care from the moment of conception: abortion and infanticide are abominable crimes" (Gaudium et Spes, n. 51).
[56] Cf. Evangelium Vitae, n. 11.

reconnect our home with that of our parents and that of our children and our grandchildren. Thus, together with the importance of the "chain of generations", we also regain a new sense of our individual reality.[57] The family connection reminds us both of memory (our grandparents) and of the future (our grandchildren).

This relationship in the sequence of parents also has great importance according to an ecclesial perspective. Indeed, it is already heavily emphasized in the Old Testament. The marvels wrought by God for his people are gathered together and then handed down from generation to generation. It is in the succession of human generations that God generates the chosen people. The two meanings of the term "generation" refer to each another: generation is first of all the transmission of life in all its dimensions. A generation is also the space of time between the moment in which a person was generated and that in which he himself is called to generate. As the place for generation par excellence, the family is therefore the first liturgical cell of the believing community: the marvels worked by God in the past are commemorated in it and God's fidelity to his promises for the future is celebrated in it.

The family, an economic unit

25. The procreative and educative dimensions of the family constitute an indisputable economic factor which must be recognized as such. Attempts to consider economic activity as independent of the profound spiritual significance of every human activity alter the ultimate foundation of economic science itself as a human science. If all scientific and technical activity has as its ultimate aim service to the human person, in economic activity this affirmation acquires an even deeper realism. Economic activity is addressed to the human being who in turn, gives meaning to the economy. Economic models are superfluous unless they can interpret and satisfy human needs, as far as possible.

In the womb of the family there must be privileged conditions that permit the people who make up the family unit to satisfy their own legitimate needs. To ensure that this happens must be the objective both of families and of society as a whole. In the family incomes converge and the family members put their needs in a hierarchical order of their own choice in order to satisfy them. This is one of the economic objectives of the family unit and is equivalent to being concerned for our life and our well-being. However, the more culture progresses and the greater the capacity people have for acquiring, through a laborious process of production, the goods necessary to satisfy their own needs, the more urgent it becomes for them to foresee this satisfaction, that is to discover in advance their needs for future periods of time. In the family community, the person acts as a subject of consumption, in which the responsible action of the family unit defines and orients the concept of need and satisfaction.

However, the economic dimension of the family is not reduced to the economy of consumption alone. Sometimes the family itself plays an important role in production, through a business activity, ordering the means of production and enabling them to satisfy the needs of other

[57] In many cases the children of unknown parents remain obsessed throughout their lives with the need to find their father and/or mother. For we all define ourselves as the children of... specific parents.

members of the human family. Together with this generic entrepreneurial activity connected with human action, the family frequently develops tasks producing goods and services, putting into practice the principle that the business, before anything else, is a community of people at the service of the entire society. The legitimacy of the purposes and the correct use of resources, especially human resources, as well as their adequacy, will be what give an economic and social qualification to the family business activity.

A practical duty is therefore incumbent upon the State and upon public authorities in general to help the family to be the locus in which human procreation takes place. Since Leo XIII, in fact -- in his famous Encyclical Rerum Novarum (1891) -- the supreme magisterium of the Church has underlined the need to take the family into account in the remuneration of work, since work is first and foremost a service to the family. "It is a most sacred law of nature", the Pope writes, " that a father should provide food and all necessaries for those whom he has begotten... it is natural that he should wish that his children... should be by him provided with all that is needful to enable them to keep themselves decently from want and misery" (n. 13). In Quadragesimo Anno (1931) (n. 76 f.), Pius XI explains that in fixing wages it is of course necessary to take into consideration the situation of the business and the common good; but he immediately adds that the role of women and mothers deserves special attention. John Paul II takes up this teaching in various texts, in particular in Laborem Exercens (1981), in n. 19,3-6.

Economists affirm unanimously that the volume of the product depends on the use of the production factors employed. Furthermore, the volume of the national income of a country, among other things, depends very significantly upon the quantitative volume and quality of the human resources available to the economy. It is in the family that man is raised, educated, learns to apply himself, finds the basis on which to acquire knowledge and skills in view of the exercise of a profession and practices the virtue of diligence; it is the family that will cooperate in his personal fulfillment, in his good. In all these things can be seen one of the principal aspects of the close relationship between family and life. A deficit of "family" leads inexorably to a deficit of population and, together with it, to a restriction of the present and future economic possibilities of a society.

It is therefore necessary to understand properly the meaning of the term "human capital". Sometimes it is understood in a rather reductive sense, as if man must be formed with a view to an improvement of his productivity, his output, his ability to produce and to consume. This reductive concept of human capital necessarily calls for a utilitarian concept of the family, according to which the family must be useful to economic life and its main contribution to prosperity must consist in forming a human capital, understood in the sense of one that is economically effective. It is therefore necessary to strip the notion of human capital from any ambiguity and to admit that this notion embraces man in his entirety, the whole of man with his economic capacity of course, but also with his other potentials that are born and develop in the family.

The open family and the ageing of the population

26. The exaggerated individualism that pervades Western society finds in the family open to love and life a sort of barrier. In themselves the more extended parental bonds actually contribute to bringing people closer. Today it can no longer happen that two parents decide to bring into the world two, three, four or five children without a strong sense of the freely given gift of life (it is received and it is given) and without a great sense of awareness, trust and responsibility. These parents know how to shoulder a great responsibility, for themselves and for their children, but they do so because they have trust in God and in life, and because they feel that despite all the risks and uncertainties it is worthwhile. It is not at all paradoxical that aging societies should find it difficult to safeguard the sense of tradition. It is the young societies which succeed in truly making use of their own traditions; the old ones wear them out and in the end let them die.

Low fertility rates are revealing another important and perhaps unexpected social role of the family: the support that it offers for the deployment of a normal democratic dialectic. Behind the problem of the excessively low fertility rates in the West lies a moral and cultural catastrophe. Endeavors have been made and are still being made to use the so-called "demographic explosion" in a unilateral and instrumental way exclusively to ensure that the governments of the so-called developed countries put "population control" among their top priorities, both internal and international, often without any regard for the dignity of individual persons. Today, however, especially in the West, we see the manifestation - as has already been stressed - of a disturbing and at the same time dramatic demographic implosion. However, if the Western countries are worried, it is above all because of the economic consequences that this entails. For example, who will pay for our pensions? Our health-care assistance? The unemployed? Will the children of immigrants be enough?

Yet the economic aspect is only one aspect of the problem. The political and social consequences are more alarming. In a society that is ageing, inevitably and in the long run, there is a prevailing conflict between the Great proportion of the population that is ageing and the increasingly slender percentage that is young. Basically, the safeguarding of pensions in the West is now already considered far more important than the creation of new opportunities for work. The "demographic winter" might also become the winter of democracy. Here too, therefore, we see the great social value of the emergence of the family that is open to life.

CHAPTER V: THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS AND PASTORAL PERSPECTIVES

Creation and procreation

27. It is necessary first of all to emphasize that the theology of procreation is called to grow in relation to its articulation in the theology of creation.[58] Under the effect of the Enlightenment movement, the conception of God that tends to prevail in some circles today contains nothing of a God who is Father and Providence for his children, who cares about the world and keeps every created thing alive. The God of the Enlightenment does not care either about humankind or about his creatures overall. They all obey laws that are purely immanent. In this vision, so widespread today, only a residual ethic subsists, summed up in a determinism which, in the end, consecrates the survival of the fittest.

In this perspective, Jesus, the Son of God, who pitched his tent among us, becomes useless and even cumbersome. A purely historical Jesus, the result of this reduction, demands that the Church be conceived as a construction of men and Sacred Scripture as nothing but an anthology of aphorisms which each individual interprets in his own way.

This radical reduction of God, of Jesus, of the Church and of Scripture makes it possible to understand the stubborn will that spurs many men and women to arrogate to themselves the creative power of God in the name of procreative freedom. Man and woman want to ape God by going against him to arrogate to themselves the power of producing man, that is, the created being who, as a person, is a reflection of the divine beauty in the world. Having disputed God's sovereign power of giving life, they do not fail also to arrogate to themselves the power of giving death.

The humanism born from the rationalism of the Enlightenment has led to the diffusion of a trivializing, radically unreligious concept of procreation. Dismissed from the empirical world, God no longer has anything to do either with human procreation or with the human body. We have before us here a tendency towards practical atheism. The errors of men and women with regard to life are first and foremost errors that strike blows at their relationship with God. The power to become children of God, taking part as cooperators made in his image in God's creative power, is rejected at its very root when men and women deny for themselves, de facto, their condition as children of God. How will they procreate children of God, given that in their sexual relationship itself they put their condition as children of God in parentheses?

Thus can be seen the importance of the affirmation we made earlier when we indicated that every theology of human procreation must, in the last analysis, stem from the theology of

[58] In his writings, CARDINAL JOSEPH RATZINGER has often recalled the need to refer to the theology of creation to found moral and sacramental theology and to renew the liturgy and catechesis. See, for example, Un chant nouveau pour Ie Seigneur. La foi dans Ie Christ et la liturgie aujourd'hul, Paris, Desclee, 1995.

creation. "Male and female, he created them", Genesis states; it is immediately suggested that the man and the woman are called to be a sign of the gift without reserve of the Father to the Son and of the Son to the Father, in a loving embrace that proceeds from the Father and from the Son and has the Holy Spirit for its name. This Trinitarian reality of the divine family, and with it the notion of the man and the woman as beings created in the image of God and called by him to collaborate in the transmission of the gift of life, must be borne in mind in all theological reflection and in all preaching on the family. On this ultimately depends the effectiveness of the process of renewal of family life to which the Church and society are called today.

The family and the new evangelization

28. The Church is aware that she must "carry on the work of Christ under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, for he came into the world to bear witness to the truth, to save and not to judge, to serve and not to be served".[59] To carry out this task she is responsible for "reading the signs of the times" and for analyzing cultural conditions, both of which are mentioned at the beginning of this document, and for interpreting them in the light of the Gospel so that, in language intelligible to each generation, she can answer the ever recurring questions which men ask about the meaning of this present life and the life to come, and how one is related to the other. Indeed, we must be aware of and understand the aspirations, the yearnings, and the often dramatic features of the world in which we live.[60]

Man, and with him the family, is the "way" on which the Church today must travel if she is to be faithful to her Master.[61] The new evangelization passes through man and the family. It cannot but be for man and with man, for the family and with the family: both man and "the family... [continue] to be the 'way of the Church",[62]

The relationship between the new evangelization and the family has found its precise place in the Apostolic Exhortation Familiaris Consortio (1981):

> "'The family, like the Church, ought to be a place where the Gospel is transmitted and from which the Gospel radiates. In a family which is conscious of this mission, all the members evangelize and are evangelized. The parents not only communicate the Gospel to their children, but from their children they can themselves receive the same Gospel as deeply lived by them. And such a family becomes the evangelizer of many other families, and of the neighborhood of which it forms part'. (Evangelii Nuntiandi, n. 71).... The future of evangelization depends in great part on the Church of the home".[63]

Familiaris Consortio outlines the fundamental coordinates of the participation of the family in the evangelizing work of the Church, indicating its theological and sacramental roots, family

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[59] Gaudium et Spes, n. 3.
[60] Cf. Gaudium et Spes, n. 4.
[61] Cf. Redemptor Hominis, n. 14.
[62] Cf. Gratissimam Sane, n. 3.
[63] Familiaris Consortio, n. 52.

procedures and fundamental content. The family is called to the task of evangelization according to a process which is its own and original, different from the one which characterizes the individual believer by virtue of his baptism.

The Christian family, the domestic Church, is born from the sacrament of marriage that specifies baptism. The sacrament raises this natural bond, sanctifying the intimate communion of life and love. And precisely because the family is called to evangelize with its very being, the essential nucleus of its saving mission in the world is marked by two fundamental values inherent in its identity: love and life.

The mission of the Church is always the extension of Christ's mission. Her evangelizing task is therefore Christological in character. The proclamation to the world of the Father's saving love is explained by analogy with the mystery of Christ, of the Church and of the family. Christ is the sacrament that reveals and renders accessible communion with God; the Church reveals and makes present in the world the redemptive love of Christ; the family, as a domestic Church, makes it possible to experience, through the fruitful love between the spouses, this love of God which is light and life. The Christian family is therefore an evangelizing structure in action, a "subject of evangelization" rooted in its sacramental and ecclesial subjectivity, reaching out to human society.

The centrality of the pastoral care of the family and of life

29. The centrality of the pastoral care of the family and of life is not only strategic or merely contextual, due to the complex crisis that today is afflicting the institution of the family and the value of life. This centrality is teleological/ministerial, and must be understood within the entire pastoral action of the Church as one of her indispensable dimensions. It is not a matter of an alternative activity or one in competition with other sectors of pastoral care that could turn out to be contextually more central in the hierarchy of the priorities of intervention. The centrality of the pastoral care of the family and of life in the Church's pastoral ministry thus characterizes her action. Today, the new evangelization in which the family is called to participate finds itself having to. respond to challenges that it is not an exaggeration to call epochal. Those challenges more closely connected with the family concern the civilization of love and the service to life through responsible fatherhood and motherhood.

The Holy Father Benedict XVI said to the Bishops representing the Episcopal Commissions for the Family and Life of Latin America: "It is therefore indispensable and urgent that every person of good will should endeavor... to safeguard the fundamental values of marriage and the family. They are threatened by the current phenomenon of secularization".[64]

The Holy Father himself outlined for the Diocese of Rome the essential lines for the pastoral care of marriage. After describing the "fundamental connection between God and the person", and consequently, "the indissoluble connection between spirit and body", the Pope exalted the

[64] BENEDICT XVI, Address to the Presidents of the Episcopal Commissions for the Family and Life of Latin America, 3 December 2005, nn. 1-2.

truth that "the body, therefore, both male and female, also has, as it were, a theological character: it is not merely a body... but is the expression and the fulfillment of our humanity". Finally, the Pope reached his great synthesis of marriage and the family as the eminent place for the divine presence:

> "The sacramental quality that marriage assumes in Christ, therefore, means that the gift of creation has been raised to the grace of redemption. Christ's grace is not an external addition to human nature, it does not do violence to men and women but sets them free and restores them, precisely by raising them above their own limitations".[65]

The Holy Father Benedict XVI marked the first year of his Pontificate with a constant, clear insistence on the Family and on Life as the structural foundations of society and of the Church. In the Encyclical Deus Caritas Est, he showed that eros only has a worthy place in the family in the commitment to its mission for reciprocal love and for human promotion in union in one flesh.

The union of love with marriage in an integral conception of human sexuality is stressed in Part One of the Encyclical. "Eros is somehow rooted in man's very nature... eros directs man towards marriage, to a bond which is unique and definitive".[66] The Pope therefore indicates that "man is somehow incomplete, driven by nature to seek in another the part that can make him whole, the idea that only in communion with the opposite sex can he become 'complete'".[67] And he refers to Genesis 2:24, the famous text in which the meaning of being "one flesh" is never sufficiently explored. Moreover, "eros, reduced to pure 'sex', has become a commodity, a mere 'thing' to be bought and sold, or rather, man himself becomes a commodity".[68]

CONCLUSION

At the end of these reflections which we have made available in fidelity to the Magisterium, proposing to offer a reliable pastoral guide, we believe that this contribution can be open to subsequent additions. It is important to have a broad and integral view that is not limited to partial views or to individual cases that will certainly need further clarification. Today, especially in questions deriving from a well-conceived bioethics, the progress of science and technology must be totally at the service of the human being. The defense of a full conception of human dignity and the deepest truth of the family are absolutely central and fundamental in order to guarantee respect for the inviolable rights to life and the holiness of marriage, which would be seriously impoverished if the procreative mission in an integral sense were to be disregarded.

It is impossible to conceive of the family without taking into account its link with life, or to conceive of life if we neglect its relationship with the family. This is the explicit criterion of our

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[65] BENEDICT XVI, Address at the opening of the Ecclesiai Diocesan Convention of Rome on "Family and Christian community: formation of the person and transmission of the faith", 6 June 2005, nn. 1-2.
[66] BENEDICT XVI, Deus Caritas Est, n. 11.
[67] Ibid
[68] Ibid, n. 5.

Dicastery, which is celebrating the 25th anniversary of its institution by the Holy Father John Paul II on the very day that he shed his blood in St Peter's Square.

There are several topics that must be treated in continuity with the Instruction Donum Vitae on Respect for Human Life in its Origin and on the Dignity of Procreation (22 February 1987) of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, the supreme doctrinal authority at the service of the Petrine Ministry.

Our Dicastery is fully aware that without an integral vision of the family -- according to the directives of the Pontifical Magisterium and particularly of Paul VI, John Paul II and Benedict XVI, who returns with clarity and insistence to these topics -- our pastoral action would prove weak and would not follow the path that obeys God's plan for creation. The child, fruit of the love of the spouses who, in giving themselves to one another totally and putting themselves at the service of the creative love of God, form "one flesh", must be understood as "a priceless gift" of God,[69] with the vocation to be, according to Saint Irenaeus' words, "the glory of God": "Gloria Dei vivens homo, vita autem hominis visio Dei" (The glory of God is a living man and the life of man consists in beholding God).[70]

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[69] Gratissimam Sane, n. 9.
[70] SAINT IRENAEUS, Adversus Haeres, IV, 20, 7.